

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Stung by Controversy, Biomedical Groups Urge Consistent Guidelines

Ever since a scandal broke 3 years ago over drug company consulting by scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the biomedical community has worried that Congress might clamp down not just on NIH but also on academia. That could be disastrous, say life scientists at universities—many of whom interact with industry to help turn their discoveries into products. Several groups last week suggested their own solution.

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), the largest coalition of biomedical research scientists, called for a national guideline on disclosing and managing academic-industry financial relationships and held a half-day meeting in Washington, D.C., on 17 July to air the issues. Many speakers agreed that conflict-of-interest rules are inconsistent. But some cautioned against adopting a single policy.

Biomedical lobbyists favor taking action because they are concerned that recent controversies could undermine confidence in the research enterprise. A congressional investigation of NIH revealed that some intramural scientists failed to get NIH's approval for outside consulting work. And the recent safety-based recalls of drugs such as Vioxx, along with the failure of some authors of research papers to report financial conflicts, have raised doubts about the objectivity of scientists with industry ties. Drug discovery has gone "from one of the most revered to one of the most reviled industries," said FASEB immediate past president Leo Furcht.

There's been one change already: The House and Senate have each approved a Food and Drug Administration bill that would make it harder for those who give scientific advice to the agency to vote on drug approvals if they have any significant financial conflict. Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO) has also drafted legislation that would require researchers involved in clinical trials to report financial conflicts to the ethics boards that review such trials. Even these modest steps have made some people nervous. "Don't let the pendulum swing too far," cautioned Gail Cassell of Indianapolis, Indiana-based pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly, who fears too-strict rules would exclude "extremely knowledgeable people" as reviewers.

Academic organizations are worried that

Congress will require extramural researchers to follow NIH's new ethics policy, which bans all consulting for industry and limits the amount of drug company stock that senior staff members may own. These rules wouldn't make sense for most grantees, NIH Extramural Research chief Norka Ruiz Bravo told the meeting, because grantees are not federal employees and do not get all their support from NIH. Still, she noted, Congress could decide to impose the same rules anyway.

FASEB thinks the answer is to bring more consistency to existing institutional policies, building on guidelines for clinical research that the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in Washington, D.C., issued to its members in 2001. A survey has since found much variation in responses to the guidelines, said Susan Ehringhaus of AAMC. For example, the threshold for reporting conflicts differs from university to university, and AAMC's advice to include a member of the public on a committee review-

ing conflicts is often neglected. Furcht said that FASEB endorses an ongoing effort by AAMC and the Association of American Universities to clarify and strengthen the 2001 AAMC report.

Participants at the FASEB meeting were generally supportive. "As investigators, we would love to have consistency" across institutions, says David Bylund of the University

Industry Support of Medical School Departments

TYPES OF FUNDING

28%	Research support
20%	Technology transfer funds
14%	Research equipment
14%	Support for students and postdocs

Ties that bind. A recent survey of medical school departments found that a significant fraction had some relationship with industry.

of Nebraska, Omaha. But some university administrators said it would be difficult, partly because public universities have to tailor their policies to state laws. In the meantime, FASEB has unveiled an online "tool kit" to help investigators, institutions, and others navigate conflicts of interest.

—JOCELYN KAISER

DAN KOSHLAND, 1920–2007

Daniel E. Koshland Jr., *Science's* editor-in-chief from 1985 to 1995, died on 23 July, 2 days after suffering a massive stroke.

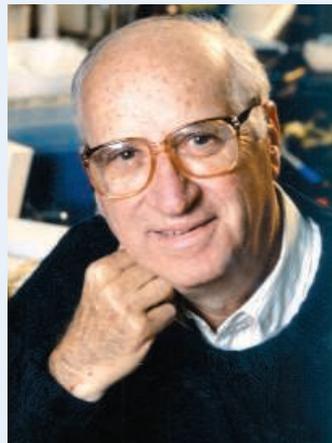
Koshland, who joined the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley, in 1965, put his stamp on a broad swath of protein chemistry. His fundamental insight that proteins change shape as they interact with other molecules—the "induced fit" theory—changed the way scientists perceived a range of processes, from the catalytic power of enzymes to the action of hormones. He published more than 400 papers, an output that continued unabated in recent years.

He also left his mark on *Science*. He overhauled the peer-review process, establishing a Board of Reviewing Editors; oversaw the internationalization of the journal with the launch of an office

in Europe and news bureaus around the world; and increased the number of top-quality papers in the physical sciences. "He had an unmatched talent for recognizing quality," says Executive Editor Monica Bradford.

Don Kennedy, *Science's* current editor-in-chief, says: "As a grateful successor, I find traces of Dan's thoughtful influence everywhere at *Science*. Dan has been my colleague in planning the Koshland Museum at the National Academy—a jewel that results from a generous gift to honor his late wife Bunny. It is difficult to lose a hero and a friend in the same person."

News of Koshland's death came as this issue of *Science* was going to press. A retrospective will be published in a forthcoming issue, and a page of personal staff remembrances is posted at www.sciencemag.org/sciext/koshland.



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